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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Identical letters dated 4 June 2012 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I regret to inform you of the deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the repressive and illegal measures that continue to be undertaken by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people. Rather than reciprocating to the hand extended in peace by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, the Government of Israel continues to inflict harm and suffering on the Palestinian people, including on the thousands of Palestinians imprisoned and detained by the occupying Power, and continues to pursue its illegal expansionist agenda with its aggressive colonization of the Palestinian land.

In this regard, it is important to recall that 5 June tragically marks the passage of 45 years since the onset of the Israeli military occupation of the Palestinian and Arab lands in 1967. The commemoration of this day, just a few weeks following the observance of the sixty-fourth anniversary of *Al-Nakba*, is yet another harsh reminder of the injustice inflicted upon the Palestinian people over all of these decades under this oppressive, illegitimate Israeli occupation and of the continued inability of the international community to fulfil its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, international law and relevant United Nations resolutions to bring an end to this injustice, resolve the question of Palestine in all its aspects and help the Palestinian people to realize their inalienable human rights, including the right to self-determination and freedom. The failure to hold Israel, the occupying Power, accountable for its grave breaches of the law and ongoing brutal subjugation of the Palestinian nation has protracted and exacerbated this conflict, with a grave impact on the Palestinian people. This is starkly reflected in the current situation on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, wherein the illegal policies of Israel continue to detrimentally affect every aspect of life for the Palestinian civilian population, who continue to endure, inter alia, death, injury, dispossession and displacement at the hands of the occupying Power.

In the recent period, Israel has continued to launch military raids by ground and air on Palestinian areas. On 1 June, the Israeli occupying forces carried out air strikes against the Gaza Strip after an incident along the Israeli-Gaza border in which a Palestinian man, Ahmed Abu Nasser, age 22, and an Israeli soldier were killed in an exchange of gunfire. Those air strikes resulted in the killing of one Palestinian, Naji Qudeih, age 34, and the wounding of three others, and were followed by more air strikes overnight on 2 June, which struck a home in the Nuseirat refugee camp, wounding seven people from the same family, including three children and an infant.

The Israeli occupying forces also continue to carry out raids throughout the West Bank and in particular continue to arrest and detain Palestinian civilians, adding to the thousands of Palestinians already held captive in Israeli jails. In only the period since my previous letter, dozens of Palestinians have been arrested by the occupying Power. Moreover, the situation of Palestinian prisoners who had been on hunger strike, some of whom continue to undertake this non-violent form of protest against the deplorable conditions in which they are being held, continues to be of great concern. Despite the agreement reached on 14 May to alleviate the harsh conditions and restrictions imposed on Palestinian prisoners, Israel continues to impose punitive and humiliating measures, particularly on prisoners who were involved in the hunger strike, and to renege on the agreement. The occupying Power has renewed the administrative detentions of at least 30 Palestinian detainees, including Sheikh Bassam al-Saadi, who helped in the efforts to reach last month's agreement to end the mass hunger strike. Israel also continues to hold one prisoner in solitary confinement and to impose restrictions on family visitation to prisoners from the Gaza Strip.

Here, I must draw your attention to the grave condition of two Palestinian men who continue a prolonged hunger strike in protest of their administrative detention by Israel. Mahmoud Al-Sarsak, a member of the Palestinian national football team, has been on hunger strike since 19 March 2012, for 77 days now, in protest of his detention without charge by Israel since July 2009, when he was seized while leaving the Gaza Strip to join his team in the West Bank. Al-Sarsak, who is emaciated, losing consciousness and in grave health and is being held at the Ramle prison clinic, has had his detention renewed six times by Israel without the presentation of any charges or evidence against him. Also, Akram Al-Rekhawi, who has been held in detention since June 2004, has been on hunger strike for 53 days and also remains at the Ramle prison clinic due to the refusal of Israel to transfer him to a civilian hospital, despite the fact that he suffers from diabetes, asthma and osteoporosis. The lives of these two men are clearly in danger and demand immediate attention, and we call upon the United Nations to act urgently via the good offices of the Secretary-General and through the relevant mechanisms of the General Assembly and Security Council, to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease this inhumane practice of administrative detention and to allow for proper medical treatment to save the lives of these men.

The deterioration of Al-Sarsak's and Al-Rekhawi's situation, in addition to the renewal by Israel of administrative detentions and continued subjection of prisoners to deplorable conditions of captivity and restrictions, are matters of grave concern that require immediate redress. Palestinian prisoners have vowed to return to hunger strike if Israel continues to renege on the 14 May agreement and tensions on the ground continue to rise as a result of this critical situation. We therefore renew our

call upon the international community, including the General Assembly and Security Council, to give the matter due attention and to act in accordance with obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, to bring a halt to the illegal policies and practices of Israel in this regard and restore to the Palestinian people their rights and dignity.

At the same time, we must once again draw the international community's attention to the continuing illegal settlement campaign of Israel throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which also continues to inflame tensions and poison the environment, further undermining any prospects for a revival of the peace process as it continues to destroy the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. Israel, the occupying Power, continues its mal-intentioned, illegitimate attempts to entrench its illegal settlements and outposts, including by measures aimed at circumventing its own High Court rulings in order to permit and "legalize" such illegal settlements. All such attempts must be rejected by the international community, and it must be emphasized to the occupying Power that the illegitimate cannot become legitimate and that Israel must bring a complete cessation to all of its illegal settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and abide by its legal obligations, including under the Fourth Geneva Convention and its road map obligation to freeze all settlement activities, including so-called "natural growth", and dismantle all settlement outposts, and under the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Further in this regard, Israel, the occupying Power, continues to demolish Palestinian homes and properties and evict and displace Palestinian families. As reported by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in 2011, both the number of structures demolished (622) and the number of persons displaced (1,094) in the West Bank was the highest since the Office started collecting statistics systematically in 2006, with home demolitions being the direct cause of most displacement. In just the recent period, Israel demolished a gas station and shop in the town of Hizma, razed 30 dunums of agricultural land and destroyed the irrigation system in the village of Al-Baqa'a, demolished six residential tents housing over 30 Palestinians in Al-Jihesh valley, demolished a home that had been under construction in East Jerusalem, demolished stone terraces and uprooted 100 olive trees in 13,000 square metres of Palestinian land in the village of Beit Ula, issued demolition orders for a school, access roads, tents, mud huts and solar energy facilities in the Jinba cave village, and to several shop owners in the town of Arraba, and gave eviction notices to two Palestinian families in the Alqurma neighbourhood of the Old City in East Jerusalem, along with notices to hand their properties over to Israeli settlers. These ongoing acts of Israel aggression, dispossession and displacement of the Palestinian people constitute grave violations of the law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, and of the human rights of the Palestinian people and must be condemned.

In this connection, the continued pursuit by Israel of this illegal, expansionist campaign is also further emboldening the impunity of extremist Israeli settlers, who continue to rampage throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Settlers continue to torch Palestinian land, including the burning of a 1,000-year-old olive tree in Al-Khalil on 1 June, the torching of fields in the village of Orif near Nablus on 26 May, the burning of hundreds of acres of olive groves near Tulkarm and the damaging of harvest in fields in the Bethlehem area in the village of Wadi Fukin on 14 May. Settlers also continue to attack, beat and harass

Palestinian civilians, including a 22-year-old Palestinian who was shot by Israeli settlers on 26 May, a 6-year-old Palestinian child who was run over by an Israeli settler near Ramallah on 25 May, and dozens of homes in the Tuqu village near Bethlehem that were attacked by settlers on 22 May, while settlers also continue to threaten Palestinian farmers on a daily basis, gravely impairing their livelihoods.

On 28 May, it was also reported that Israeli occupying forces and settlers had raided the village of Nabi Samwil, to the north-west of Jerusalem, and harassed and humiliated villagers, including by ordering young men to dance and sing "I love Israel", physically beating and injuring those who refused the orders, while at the same time another group of settlers drove around the village trying to run over the youths and assaulted a 16-year-old boy. Also, two days ago, on 2 June, armed Israeli settlers from the illegal "Kiryat Arba" settlement posted leaflets in Palestinian communities near Al-Khalil, warning residents to evacuate their homes and threatening them. We condemn such acts of terror, violence, provocation and incitement against the Palestinian civilian population and call upon the international community, including the Security Council, to act to compel Israel, the occupying Power, which is responsible for all such actions committed by its settlers, to bring an end to these depraved acts and to all other illegal actions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Moreover, Israel must be compelled to pursue genuine efforts to revive the peace process in order to resolve the core final status issues and salvage the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and thus the prospects for peace and security between Palestine and Israel.

The present letter is in follow-up to our previous 427 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, since 28 September 2000. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 9 May 2012 (A/ES-10/555-S/2012/306) constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations